Unmēsh

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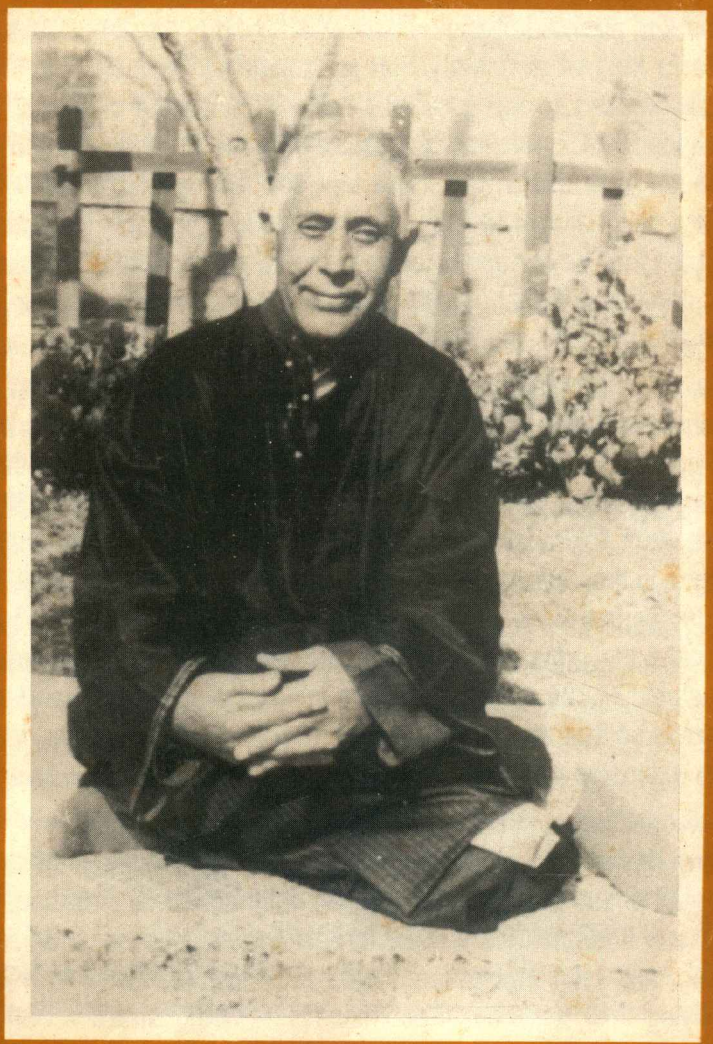
ज्ञानं अन्नं

नमस्ते शारदे देवि काश्मीर पुरवासिनि



Ishwarswaroop Swami Lakshman Joo
whose birth anniversary fell on 7th May, 2000

उन्मेष

Kashmiriat and all that

'Kashmiriat'! The word is being tossed so often these days that one really feels sick. It pops up every time a self-appointed Kashmir expert — a breed that has mushroomed fast in the recent years — has something to say on the issue that has vexed the country for more than fifty years now. Touted by politicians with woolly conceptions of the ground reality in Kashmir and parroted by the media day in and day out, it has been invested with a romantic halo, a kind of a sanctity that is thought to be inviolable! Why even the secessionists can be seen swearing by it as Yasin Malik did the other day when he gave an interview to a leading English daily published from the Capital! Perhaps it could have evoked a big laugh from those who know him well enough as leader of the dreaded militant outfit that was the first to spill the blood of innocent Kashmiri Pandits on the streets of Kashmir. But the interviewer appeared to be so infatuated that she looked keen to lap every word of it, coming as it did from the mouth of a hero whom the media itself has done so much to give a larger than life image.

Put bluntly, the word "Kashmiriat" means: "Let Kashmiris (Kashmiri Muslims of course) live the way they want to and don't you try (dare?) to interfere!" The warning is meant for India and Indians, obviously. But ask any champion of "Kashmiriat" what does the term convey precisely and you are in for a heavy dose of rhetoric laced with jargon like "tolerance", "brotherhood", "amity". Tolerance? Brotherhood? Amity? So this is for what the terrorists have taken the gun in their hands? What does Kashmir history have to say, anyway? The Persian chronicles written by Muslim chroniclers, if you please. Doesn't it point to the frequent bloodbaths that have taken place after Islam overran the valley — the blood being that of Kashmiri Hindus that was shed to bring glory to the faith and to terrorise the hearts of the infidels so that they would be compelled to embrace Islam. Isn't the present call for jehad an extension of the same medieval mindscape?

Perhaps that is not exactly what the media-savvy non-Kashmiri 'intellectual' thought when he coined the term that is now being used as a counterweight to 'Indianness'. Perhaps he just wanted an alibi to bail out the secessionists, fully armed by Pakistan, and condone their barbaric acts in Kashmir. He wanted to package their cause, wrapping it in a very innocuous-looking, and fashionable, language. "Kashmiriat", the way of life peculiar to Kashmiris, signifying their essential "Kashmiriness" — well, what's wrong with it? You can't ride rough shod over a people's identity, the traits and characteristics that define their personality — can you? Perhaps not.

Only the peculiar identity that is being constructed excludes almost everything that really represents the indigenous traditions, beliefs, ideals and value systems that evolved over

the centuries in Kashmir and gave shape to its ethos and culture. It has very little to do with the artistic creativity and intellectual activity of the Kashmiris which gave birth to the seminal ideas and concepts that spread to the whole world outside. The Mahayana doctrine, Kashmir's greatest gift to Buddhism, triadic Shaivism that brought about a revolution in philosophical thought in India, the theories of the great Kashmiri aesthetes that constitute almost three-fourths of Indian aesthetics, the masterpieces of art and architecture, folklore and literature that brought glory to Kashmir, the indigenous Sharada script, the treatises of music, grammar, medicine and other sciences that emanated from Kashmir — none of these find a place in this concept of "Kashmiriat". It certainly does not represent the core of Kashmiri culture as it is not based on continuity but discontinuity. And although some noises are being made about "Lalla Arifa" and Sheikh Nur-ud-Din Wali, the "Sheikh-ul-Alam", the Kashmiriat that is being touted is nothing but a West Asian Islamic clone implanted in Kashmir after the 14th century.

This is confirmed by the debates and discussions that were being organised on the subject in Kashmir some years prior to the outbreak of militancy. In fact these debates and discussions were held to provide an ideological underpinning to the movement for "azadi". One such discussion was organised by the Kashmiri Department of the Kashmir University (or was it the Cultural Academy?) sometime in mid-1970's, in which speaker after speaker made it plain that what he meant by "Kashmiri personality" or "identity" was perfectly in tune with what some would like to call "Islamist fundamentalism". Viewed from this perspective, the word "Kashmiriat" (which has little to do with Kashmir as such, as the term itself is not Kashmiri) is almost a cognate of "azadi". It is a euphemism for non-Indianness if not anti-Indianness.

Ironically, these champions of "Kashmiriat" have never been enthusiastic about the Kashmiri language itself. None of the names of their organisations, political or otherwise, are in Kashmiri — they are either in Arabic or Persian. Their slogans, their literature, their newspapers are all in Urdu. Their icon is neither Lal Ded, nor Sheikh Nur-ud-Din, nor even Mahjoor, but Sir Mohammed Iqbal, the poet of pan-Islamism whose role in the creation of Pakistan is well known. There is no dearth of people in the exiled Kashmiri Pandit community, however, who instead of understanding the real nuances of the term "Kashmiriat", have fallen to its bait —hook, line and sinker, just to prove their "secular" credentials. They do not seem to realize even after being hounded out of their homeland that such terms have political and not cultural connotations. They have been coined to foster separatist sentiments. The intention is not as much of safeguarding regional peculiarities as of breaking from the Indian tradition.

Let the Pandits not be carried away by the word thinking that it is a *mantra* for their salvation. Let them not hug illusions, at least now.

— S. S. T.

KECSS and NSKRI to jointly organise a national seminar on Lal Ded

Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society and N S Kashmir Research Institute are jointly organising a national seminar on Lal Ded. Titled 'Remembering Lal Ded in Modern Times', the seminar is scheduled to be held in New Delhi on Sunday, November 12, 2000.

Eminent scholars working on the most celebrated of Kashmiri saint-poets have been requested to present papers at the seminar on various aspects of her poetry, personality and philosophy in a manner that the relevance of her message in the present day world is unfolded.

The seminar will be an endeavour to look at Lal Ded from a modern perspective and to discuss her role, both as a poet and a saint, in interpreting and resolving the civilizational crisis of her times so that her insights and vision can guide us through the crisis we ourselves are facing today. The idea is also to discover new keys to the understanding of her creative impulses and philosophical thoughts.

Although Lal Ded has influenced Kashmiri psyche most deeply and helped in evolving the values and ideals that form the bedrock of Kashmiri ethos, and inspite of the fact that she is regarded by most of us as a cultural icon her name evoking deep reverence in out minds even today, there is little evidence to show that there have been serious attempts to decode the meanings of her 'Vaaks' or verses as she must have actually sought to convey. Nor has the language in which they are available to us been properly studied. The attempts to appropriate her to Islam have also created a lot of confusion with the result that some regard the Shaiva poetess as a Sufi mystic while others describe her as a saint who attempted to synthesize "the best in Islam and Hinduism" with a view to achieving Hindu-Muslim unity. There are many other grey areas too that need to be illumined. It is expected that the seminar will help in presenting Lalleshwari to the modern audience as she actually was.

Again, we know as little about her life as we knew at the time when Temple, Barnett, Grierson and Anand Kaul wrote about her in the early decades of the 20th century. Legends, myths and hagiographical accounts still do not allow her real persona to be known. The only option left to us is to view her in the light of the internal evidence provided by her verses. But here again lies a snag — the text of her verses has not been critically examined to sift what is genuinely hers from the massive interpolations that have been introduced both deliberately and inadvertently. The mess needs to be cleared and the question of authenticity of text settled. This issue too is likely to come up at the seminar, enhancing its importance. It may be pointed out that even great translators like the late A. K. Ramanujan have fallen into the trap of accepting as genuine Lal Ded what is actually only interpolation. In fact, the success of the seminar depends on how far the participating scholars shall be able to address themselves to these questions.

NSKRI seeks Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan's guidance in implementing key programmes

A delegation of NSKRI met eminent scholar and internationally reputed authority on Indian art and culture, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan recently to seek her guidance in implementing some of the key programmes and projects the Institute has taken in hand.

The delegation comprised Dr. S.S. Toshkhani, Mr. P.N.Kachru, Mr.M.L.Pandit and Mr. S.N. Pandita. Well known TV and film personality Mr. Arun Kaul, who is a life member of NSKRI, was also present.

Speaking on behalf of NSKRI, Dr. S.S. Toshkhani apprised Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan of the work the Institute was doing to preserve and protect Kashmir's cultural and artistic heritage. He told the eminent scholar that some of the major programmes that NSKRI intended to undertake in the coming months included a search for Sharada manuscripts within the country and outside and preparation of an exhaustive catalogue of these manuscripts, publication of a portfolio of Kashmir miniature paintings with an introduction, and organising an exhibition, to be titled "Shiva-Drishti", on manifestations of Shiva in Kashmiri art, literature, philosophy and life.

Some priority projects like preparation of an encyclopaedia of Kashmiri culture and establishment of a heritage centre in Delhi were also on the anvil, Dr. Toshkhani informed her, but needed huge funds for their implementation.

Appreciating the work that NSKRI was doing, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan said that all these projects were important and required to be executed in a well thought out and planned manner. Funding was also very important for their successful implementation and for that the Institute could approach the HRD Ministry and other governmental and private institutions. As far preparing a catalogue of Sharada manuscripts, Dr. Vatsyayan said that a database called catalogue of catalogues has already been published and it could prove quite useful to NSKRI for gathering initial information. The IGNCA also has published a catalogue with 3500 entries in which Sharada manuscripts have also been indexed. NSKRI could also approach other institutions for details about the manuscripts they have and prepare an institution-wise index regarding the subject area, language and script of manuscripts. Then there are non-catalogued and non-indexed manuscripts lying in various countries. The richest collection of Sharada manuscripts, however, is with the National Museum, in New Delhi. They could be approached with the request for a collaborative project on cataloguing the manuscripts — both illustrated and otherwise. The M S Institute at Baroda and the Asiatic Society of Bengal Calcutta would also be having a good number of manuscripts written in Sharada. An individual scholar living in Delhi, Pandit Sarvanand Shastri, she said,, was a mine of information regarding Sharada manuscripts — a living encyclopaedia, whose help could prove very beneficial.

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan was glad that NSKRI was thinking of publishing a portfolio of Kashmiri miniature paintings. She, however, said that a great wealth of these miniatures had gone outside the country and was in the collections of a number of foreign museums of art. Among the top museums in America that possessed Kashmiri miniatures were the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Brooklyn Museum, Philadelphia Museum, County Museum, California, Metropolitan Museum, New York, Cleveland Museum, Los Angeles, County Museum, Michigan, Chicago Art Collection. Private collections could also be a good source, though tapping them would require large sums of money, she said. Many good paintings could also be found in illus-trated Sharada and Devanagari manus. ripts. Among private art collectors who have a rich collection, Dr. Kapila Vsatsyayan advised NSKRI to contact Mr. C. L. Braham of Sunder Nagar, New Delhi, who, she said, was an art connoisseur and an expert as well. The project needed the skill of reconnaissance, Dr. Vatsyayan laughed.

Regarding "Shivadrishti", Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan said that it was a serious matter and she would not like to give any advice on it off hand for she needed some more time for thinking. It would be better if a film were made on the subject instead of an exhibition, she said. She would even prefer a seminar. When she organised the exhibition "Manifestations of Shiva" in America with Stella Kramrisch, she had to transport 10 tonnes of stone from India, she recalled. She, however, advised NSKRI to have a look at materials already used and to go through reprints of Kashmir Shaivism texts published by J&K Research and Publications Department, and the Nirnay Sagar Press. An annotated bibliography of such texts could be prepared on the basis of work done by scholars like Thakur Jaidev Singh, Dr. K. C. Pandey or Dr. Navjeevan Rastogi. The Nepalese connection of Kashmir Shaivism and the doctrines of northeastern and southern schools of Shaivite thought should also be duly taken into consideration. Dr. Vatsyayan mentioned the names of some leading Shaiva scholars whose help could be taken and who could be requested to write on the subject, like Mr. Merk, a Polish scholar presently teaching at the Benaras Hindu University, Dr. Bettina Baumer and Mr. Kamlesh Dutt Tripathi, Abhinavagupta scholar who are also working at Benaras. Mr. Tripathi, she said, was an excellent scholar whose views could be tape-recorded and audio cassettes prepared of it.

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan regretted that while scores of American Universities have courses in art history, there is hardly any in India, with only a couple of persons working on the art history of India. Just a few persons, she said, are working on Indian miniatures as there are hardly any facilities for such study in the Indian universities. Dr. Vatsyayan said that she was recently in the USA giving lectures at a university on the Bhagvat. "Can one teach Bhagvat in any university in India, except on a ghat of Benaras?", she asked.

Referring to her own experience, Dr. Vatsyayan revealed how despite very few facilities and numerous constraints she conceived the idea of setting up the IGNCA and succeeded in giving shape to it.

The NSKRI delegation thanked Dr.Kapila Vatsyayan for sparing some time for it and giving it such valuable advice.

LET US LEARN SHARADA

Lesson 1:The Vowels

I.1: Introduction:

Sharada, the script that was traditionally employed in Kashmir for writing Sanskrit and Kashmiri, has evolved like all other Indian scripts from Brahmi. The process of its evolution started in the 6th -7th century and got completed around the 9th century when it finally took shape as a distinct alphabet. Named after "Sharada Desh" or "Sharada Bhumi", as Kashmir was called in the ancient times for being a great centre of learning, the Sharada alphabet is closely related to Devanagri and is built along the same lines with the letters 'sa' and 'ha' coming at the end. Aurel Stein has rightly called it "the elder sister of Devanagri".

Kashmir's earliest literary works and documents are written in the Sharada alphabet. From Kashmir it spread to the neighbouring Himalayan regions. It was extensively used as a medium of written communication over a vast area in North-West India, parts of which are in Pakistan now, Afghanistan, Gilgit, Chilas, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. Paleographical evidence suggests that it was used in Delhi also along with the Devnagri script.

Even after Persian was made the court language in the 15th century, the use of Sharada continued alongside the Nastaliq script of Persian for quite a long time. Several tombs of the 15th and the 16th century have epitaphs inscribed in both the Persian and Sharada scripts. Several documents of this period have also been written in both the scripts, the medieval saint Sheikh Makhdoom Hamza's will preserved in the Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, being one example. The will was written in 1577.

The Gurumukhi script of Punjabi has developed from Sharada through Takri, its offshoot. However, with Persian entrenched as the official language in Kashmir for a long period only to be followed by Urdu, the use of Sharada gradually declined to only horoscope writing and copying religious texts for personal use. Today Sharada is on the verge of extinction though there still exist a handful of persons who can read and write the script.

The NSKRI believes that there is urgent need for revival of the Sharada script, its knowledge for studying the ancient literature and history of Kashmir being essential. "Unmesh" is initiating the process by introducing Sharada lessons from the current issue.

It will be easier for those acquainted with the Devanagari script to learn Sharada as both the writing systems follow the same phonetic pattern. Sharada letters are, however, formed in a different manner from Devanagri, with each letter having a name. To begin with, we are giving below the Sharada vowels along with their names and the corresponding Devanagari letters. It may be pointed out here that there are no separate letters in the Sharada orthographical system for the six special vowel sounds of Kashmiri except that the vertical stroke (*khadi paayi*) and the "*halant*" sign which were used, sometimes, as diacritical marks.

I. 2. Vowels:

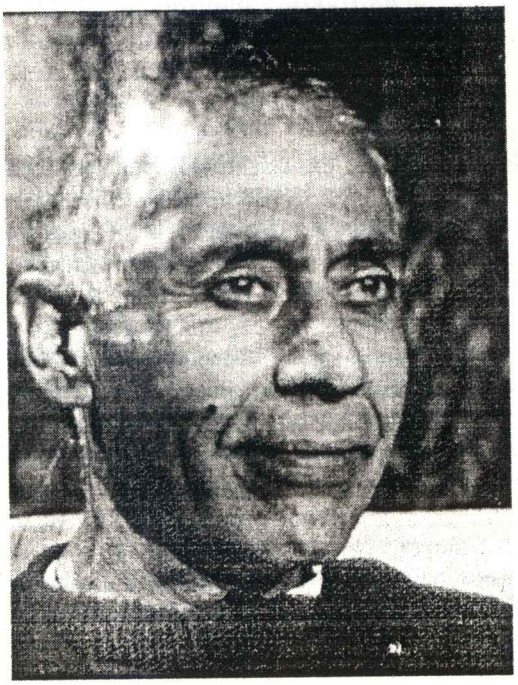
Sharada	Devanagri	Name (in Devanagri)	Matra (vowel signs)
𑆃	अ	आदव अ	
𑆄	आ	आतव आ	𑆰
𑆅	इ	इयव इ	𑆱
𑆆	ई	ईशरव ई	𑆲
𑆇	उ	उपल उ	𑆳
𑆈	ऊ	उपलबा ऊ	𑆴
𑆉	ऋ	रिनव ऋ	𑆵
𑆊	ए	क्रालव ए	𑆶
𑆋	ऐ	त्राली ऐ	𑆷
𑆌	ओ	उठो ओ	𑆸
𑆍	औ	औषधी औ	𑆹
𑆀	अं	मसफिरि अं	𑆺
𑆁	अः	दुफिरि अः	𑆻

Note : Sharada letters for 𑆉, 𑆉𑆳 and 𑆉𑆴 have not been given as these are of little practical use

A 16th century Kashmiri grave with the epitaph incribed both in Sharada and Nastaliq scripts

ISHWARSWAROOP SWAMI LAKSHMAN JOO:
The Beaconlight of Shaiva Thought

[Swami Lakshman joo has been hailed as the greatest depository of the oral tradition of Kashmir Shaivism in modern times. For his numerous devotees and disciples all over the world he was "Ishwarswaroop"— the very embodiment of divinity. Indeed he did look like a living god with the philosophy that he taught laying all emphasis on the divine nature of man and his complete identification with Shiva, the supreme reality. Perhaps no one has done more to bring the profoundity of this philosophy, known as Trika, within the grasp of the modern-day man than Swami Lakshman joo. Anybody who came into contact with this divinity incarnate and had the opportunity to hear him felt his doubts melting away and the deep mysteries of the triadic mysticism becoming clear and comprehensible. Quite a number of his discourses and lectures were tape-recorded by several seekers and scholars who came to learn at his feet — some of them having been brought out in the shape of publications also. This triggered an unprecedented Shaiva renaissance in a world groping for answers to some of the most confounding questions of existence. This piece is an attempt to look at some aspects of the life and personality of a spiritual giant who had a key to them. It comes at a time when his 93rd birth anniversary will have been celebrated in different parts of the country and the world. — Ed.]



With a face serene and resplendent like a lotus blooming in a limpid lake and eyes brimming with compassion for the suffering humanity, Swami Lakshman joo (SLJ) was very much like a living god in appearance — *Ishwarswaroop,* as his devotees and disciples liked to call him! His presence was a source of great solace and reassurance to those whose minds tossed in spiritual unrest looking for redemption from doubt and ignorance and groped for answers to most vexing questions thrown up by the human situation — the questions of existence and essence. There was an aura of irresistibly strong spiritual magnetism about his personality, so strong that scholars and seekers, researchers and devotees, those tormented by the predicament of man and those concerned about his ultimate destiny, those who sought salvation for themselves and those who wanted spiritual redemption for the whole mankind, were drawn to him from far and wide, trying to understand the mysteries of the triadic mysticism from him.

One such scholar who met the Master for the first time in 1948 and stayed back at his Ashram for twenty long years to study the Shiva Sutras, Lilian Silburn of Centre National de La Research of Paris has called him "the last grand master of Shaivism in Kashmir to possess the key to its doctrine". Silburn received from him help in understanding *Shiva Sutra* commentaries and also the *Spanda Karika* and *Vijnana Bhairava*", she acknowledges. Andre Padoux, her colleague at the Centre Internationale, a distinguished scholar, also came with her to seek guidance from the "Sage of Ishber", as Swamiji came to be called. Well known German scholar and spiritual aspirant Bettina Baumer, who has made India her home and is living at Varanasi, owes much of her vast knowledge and profound understanding of Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir to SLJ's guidance, who she has described as "the only living representative of the full Kashmir Shaiva tradition both in its theory and practice, Shastra and Yoga".

Dr. Jaidev Singh, whose translations and interpretations of Shaiva texts won a wide acclaim, spent many years with SLJ. He dedicated his translation of the "*Pratibhijna Hridayam*" to him in these words: "With profound respect to Swami Lakshman joo, to whom I owe whatever little I know of *Pratibhijna* philosophy". He also dedicated his translation of the "*Vijnana Bhairava*" to Swami ji, "who unsealed my eyes", regarding him as " the doyen of *Shaivagama*".

For Paul Reps, the celebrated author of "Zen Flesh, Zen Bones", a visit to Kashmir became a journey of discovery, for there by the grace of Swamiji he discovered the "*Vijnana Bhairava*", an important pre-Zen text of Kashmir Shaivism. Writes he about his meeting with the great Master at his Ashram at Ishber: "Wandering in the affable beauty of Kashmir, above Srinagar, I came upon the hermitage of Lakshman joo. It overlooks green rice fields, the gardens of Shalimar and Nishat Bagh, lakes fringed with lotus. Water streams down from a mountain top. Here Lakshman joo — tall, full-bodied, shining welcomes me. He shares with me this ancient teaching.....I see Laskhman joo gives his life to its practice".

This observation by Padoux is important as it points to the fact that SLJ's expositions were not mere theoretizations but based on the profoundity of his own experience and practice as an adept Shaiva yogi. This image of his is further reinforced by Mark Dyezkowski, a Polish scholar associated with the Sampoornanand Sanskrit University, when he says: "He was an inspiration to me as a living example of Kashmir Shaivism in practice..... He seemed to be a great adept even while giving his expositions to scriptures. Somehow he sees much more in them than could ever be grasped through mere bookish knowledge and we (Swami ji's pupils) could all feel that behind his words lay another dimension beyond them in which he lived and from which he beckoned us to join him".
A host of other scholars have expressed their indebtedness to the Master in a similar fashion for guiding them through Shaiva texts — Dr. Obeyr Botto, Alexis Sanderson, Prof. Harvey P. Alfer, Gerald Larson, K. Shivaraman, J.G. Tarapura and Pandit Rameshwer Jha to name only some of them. All of these scholars have done very significant work on different aspects of Kashmir Shaivism in light of the interpretations of Swamiji.

The fact is that the range and depth of Swami Lakshman joo's study of and insight into Kashmir's Shaiva texts matched perhaps only that of the great Abhinavgupta to whom he traces his spiritual lineage. No wonder that he has been called "Modern Abhinavgupta" by some — and not merely out of reverence.

"*Gati manza gaash aav chyaane zyanay, jai-jai-jai Divkinandanay!*" (Hail! Hail Devaki's son, your birth has turned darkness into light) sang Swami Ram, a widely revered Shaivite saint of the times, repeating poet Parmanand's famous line on the birth of Krishna and dancing in joy when the news of Lakshman joo's birth reached him. He should have known, for he also happened to be the family priest of Arnimali and Narayan Das Raina to whom SLJ was born as their fifth child on May 7, 1907. Pandit Narayan Das Raina was a leading Kashmiri entrepreneur who had become a household name for having first introduced the houseboat in Kashmir. " I am called Ram, so let the child be called Lakshman" Swami Ram is said to have exclaimed in a rapturous state of mind.

Reasons for Swami Ram's ecstasy became soon clear as boy Lakshman's spiritual inclinations began to show — at three he was making clay *Shiva lingas* while playing, and at five he began to sit in meditation. The worried parents took their son's behaviour to be abnormal and rushed to Swami Ram for help — only to be told that they should not disturb the boy as he was a born Yogi. Swami Ram, who also ran the Shri Ram Trika Shaivashram at Fatehkadal in a house gifted to him by Pandit Narayan Das, now started monitoring boy Lakshman's spiritual development himself, teaching him the *Gayatri mantra* and yogic exercises. But the Swami was soon to give up his mortal frame, before which he entrusted the child — who was seven at that time — to the spiritual care of his chief disciple Swami Mehtab Kak.

With Swami Methab Kak in the charge, SLJ made quantum leaps towards spiritual maturity, astonishing everyone around and learning fast

Shaiva and other religious lore. When he reached the age of 13, marriage proposals started pouring in for young Laskhman, but he shocked his eager parents by a firm, "No". Resisting all pressure to get married, he took the decision of his life to embark on the spiritual path and devoted more and more time to meditation and the practice of yoga.

In the meantime his formal schooling had begun in right earnest, in addition to which he showed great interest in learning Sanskrit. Two of the best Sanskrit scholars of the time, Pandit Maheshwar Razdan and Pandit Harbhatt Shastri taught him the language in the traditional manner. He first memorised Sanskrit grammar — Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* — and then proceeded to understand the "*Matrichakra*", or the Theory of the Alphabet, from a Shaiva perspective. He also studied the Shaiva Shastras and other Indian philosophical texts to prepare himself for future life.

By the time he was 20, Swamiji was prepared to take the final plunge. One day he left home, leaving a chit of paper for his brothers in which he had asked them to take care of his parents as he was "leaving in search of the Supreme". The alarmed parents launched a massive search for the missing boy who was eventually found in the dense forests of Sadhu Ganga, near Sopore, absorbed in deep meditation, sitting on a tiger skin.The young ascetic agreed to return only after his father promised to build a separate cottage for him at a secluded place of his choice.

In 1934, one of the most picturesque spots was chosen at Ishber between the Nishat and Shalamar gardens on the slope of a mountain overlooking the Dal lake for his cottage. Pandit Narayana Das Raina purchased a large piece of land there and built a hermitage for his son in the midst of a splendid garden full of exotic flowers and fruit bearing trees. It was natural for Swamiji to fall in love with the spot, for it was somewhere here that the greatest of Kashmir's Shaiva masters, Abhinavgupta, lived about 9 centuries ago.

Swamiji's chief disciple Sharika Devi also moved to her Master's Ashram. She had become Swamiji's disciple way back in 1929 when she was only sixteen years old. Soon after her younger sister Prabhaji also joined her and was initiated by Swami ji. The Ashram now became a hub of spiritual activity, attracting seekers, scholars and researchers interested in Kashmir Shaivism from all over the world, besides lay devotees who thronged it in hundreds.

Meanwhile SLJ's reputation as the greatest modern day exponent of *Trika* kept on soaring and several spiritual luminaries came to visit and talk to him. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who had come to Kashmir with a large entourage of Western disciples in 1970, met SLJ at his Ashram, coming back immensely impressed. So did Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Swami Ranganathananda and Swami Muktananda, acclaiming him as an exalted soul and a great authority on Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir. Swami Muktananda, in fact, remained in association with SLJ from the early days of the Ashram and kept on visiting him thereafter, calling him the "messenger of peace".

Swami ji enjoyed having scholarly discussions with two contemporary local scholar friends of his, Pandit Nilakanth Jotshi who later became Swami Nilakanthananda Saraswati, and Pandit Sat Ram Bhat. They would often meet and generally talk about the *Brahmasutras*, Shankaracharya and *Yogvasishtha*.

In 1965, SLJ visited Varanasi and delivered a lecture on *Kundalini Vijnana Rahasya* at the Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, which held the scholars of Varansi spellbound and won the appreciation of the great *tantra* scholar Mahamahopadhyay Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj. Later, BHU conferred an honorary degree of D. Litt. on Swami ji for his contribution to Sanskrit.

Meanwhile, lectures and discourses by Swamiji on different aspects of Shaivism became a regular feature of the programme at the Ashram at Ishber which was named Ishwar Ashram. In fact Swamiji was the pivot around whom all the activities and programmes revolved — he would answer the queries of the visitors, clear their doubts, guide the devotees in the practice of Shaiva yoga, have discussions and special classes for scholars and researchers pursuing Shaiva studies. These

included besides the regular devotees, seekers and scholars from France, America, Britain, Poland, Switzerland, Germany, Japan and other countries, who were enlightened by the way Swamiji explained to them some of the most profound and intricate aspects of the Shaiva doctrine. These scholars later contributed significantly to the growth of studies relating to Kashmir Shaivism through translations and conducted valuable research in the light of the Master's interpretations and explanations. Like Abhinavagupta, SLJ had a perfect grasp over the doctrines of all the schools and systems that come under the cover-name "*Trika*". His inimitable way of explaining things had immediate impact because all that he said came from the accumulated value of his study of years and his personal experience and practice of Shaiva yoga.

One event that inmates of Ishwar Ashram and the ever expanding host of SLJ's devotees loved to celebrate with greatest devotion and enthusiasm was Ishwarswaroop Swami Lakshman joo's birthday. The celebrations would start from early dawn amidst singing of *bhajans* and chanting of *mantras* and ended when the Master would come out of his trance after the *pooja* to personally bless the devotees and distribute the *prasada* and apply *tilak* on their foreheads. The whole Ashram would reverberate with *Gurustuti* chanted by the devotion-charged devotees.

Another day that Swamiji was keen to celebrate at his Ishwar Ashram was the annual *shraaddha* of his *guru*, Swami Mehtabkak.

Quite a number of Swamiji's lectures and discourses on important topics were tape-recorded by his disciples and later made into publications. It was in this manner that "Lectures on Practice and Discipline in Kashmir Shaivism" came out in 1982. Likewise his American disciples John and Denise Hughes worked hard editing his numerous tapes some of which took the shape of "Kashmir Shaivism: The Secret Supreme", which was published in 1985 and became very popular with those interested in knowing the basics of *Trika*.

SLJ himself edited, annotated and translated a number of important Sanskrit texts published in Srinagar and Varanasi, starting as early as 1933 with the "*Bhagavadgitaartha Samgraha*" of Abhinavgupta. In 1958 the "*Karmanyaya Deepika*" came out, to be followed in 1964 by *Shivastotravali* of Utpaladeva. He also translated into Hindi and annotated the "*Bodha Panchadashika*" of Abhinava. "*Panchastavi*" by Dharmacharya, which every Kashmiri Pandit used to recite with great devotion, was another work to be published with Swamiji's translation and footnotes. However, his "*Trika Rahasya Prakriya*", a comprehensive compendium of Kashmir Shaiva philosophy, could be published only after SLJ left his mortal coil.

But Swamiji's activities were not confined to the Ashram alone. He would not hesitate to travel to distant places whenever he felt the need for it. In the days when he was yet known as Brahmachari Lakshmanjee, SLJ went all the way from Srinagar to Tiruvanamalai to have the blessings of Raman Maharishi who is said to have given him "*drishtideeksha*" or initiation through gaze. In 1938, he went to Chennai to repay tributes to Madhuraja who had come to Kashmir in the 11th century to meet the great sage Abhinavagupta. He also visited Pondicherry and had the blessings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

There never was such an upsurge of interest in Kashmir Shaivism ever before as that triggered by the efforts of Ishwarswaroop Swami Lakshman joo and his enthusiastic disciples. He spread the light of *Trika* far and wide in different parts of the globe before he went into *mahasamadhi* in 1991 at the age of 84. Perhaps one of the most poignant tributes paid to the great Master was by Pandit Rameshwar Jha, a great scholar of Mithila who attributed his own realization to Swamiji's spiritual power in his "Hymn to the Master". Here are a few lines from the hymn:

I bow to the feet of divine Lakshmana,
Nectar to my eyes
Whose glorious power as the great Lord Shiva
Is incomprehensible to the intellect.

(translation: P.N.Kachru)

[Inputs : P.N. Kachru, S.N. Pandit]

Well known Kashmiri cultural activist wants UN to declare Kashmir an universal heritage area

Well known Kashmiri archaeologist and cultural activist, Mr. Brij Lal Kaul Chaman wants the UN to declare the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir as international heritage area.

Mr. Chaman has rendered long years of distinguished service as senior officer attatched to the Archaeological Survey of India and has been associated with many important archaeological activities in Kashmir and many other parts of the country.

In an article titled "The Only Way" published in a recent issue of "Koshur Samachar", Mr. Brij Lal Kaul Chaman has said that Kashmir is miniature India where followers of all major religions of the world have lived in harmony and have their important religious shrines, ancient monuments and places of pilgrimage. "In this area", Mr. Chaman writes in the article, "we have a continued history from the age of pit and cave dwellers to modern civilisation." There are sacred spots in the state to which people of all faiths from all over India flock. The Mahayana doctrine of Buddhism had its birth in Kashmir; it spread from there to Central Asia, Tibet, China and other Asian countries, the article points out. It was again in Kashmir that monastic Shaivism evolved and influenced the whole of India, it adds.

"The cultural landscape of the area", Mr. Chaman goes on to say, had an "interesting feature; festival bazars, annual fairs and pilgrim; journeys." Pilgrimage to Swami Amarnath, to Harmukat Ganga, the ceremonies to the dead at Mattan, monthly prayers at Tula Mula, Friday prayers at Tsrar and Hazratbal, the Hemis Gompa festival in Ladakh, the Vaishnodevi pilgrimage in Jammu are some instances of their dynamic aspect of socio-religious life. There is also "the musical mode of worship at Gurudwara Chhatti Paadshaahi", to which Sikhs and Hindus are drawn.

Referring to Ladakh, Mr. Chaman writes that the history of Buddhism bears testimony to Kashmir's direct links with Kashmiri Gandhara school of art". Describing it as the "cultural satellite of mainland India", he refers to the murals of Alchi which were painted by Kashmiri artists. Mr. Chaman also discerns "a direct impact of the sculptural art of Kashmir" on Ladhakhi art. He points to the significance of "the diffusion of mainly three religio-cultural streams, Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic", in the state, which, according to him, harmonized into a faith of common ideals.

Large towns like Anantnag, Baramulla, Handwara, Sopore, Srinagar, Doda, Bhaderwah, Kishtwar, Riyasi, Poonch, Rajouri , Leh and Gilgit, he goes on to say, "have become glorified with important religious centres". Throughout history, he observes, "Kashmir, Jammu, Gilgit and Ladakh have had a harmonious commercial and cultural intercourse across the state's borders with China, Russian and Turkistan in the north, China and Tibet in the east."

Mr. Chaman, however, does not forget to add that "for the last 600 years people of this area, mostly Hindus and Buddhists, were mercilessly butchered by all the invaders from north-western side." There is no such example of brutal activities committed anywhere in the world during these six hundred years, he observes, adding that it was only during the Dogra reign that some of the temples and places of pilgrimage vandalised and desecrated by the invaders from the north-west were restored and Kashmiri Hindus "started living in peace to some extent." But in 1947, Pakistani forces and Afghan terrorists started repeating such atrocities. For the last ten years terrorists and mercenaries from Pakistan and many other Muslim countries are causing death and destruction in Kashmir which, according to Mr. Chaman, has caused extensive damage to the state's cultural and artistic heritage. Atrocities committed by them during these years are "innumerable and inhuman", he writes. Mr. Chaman feels that it is high time that the UN "takes a stand with regards to Jammu and Kashmir and declares it an international heritage area." He is of the view that the UN should take steps to rehabilitate all the migrant people in different areas of Jammu and Kashmir and provide them with schools, hospitals and other necessities. "It should also get temples and religious places repaired and wherever possible reconstructed and beautified by fresh plantation and environ developments," he concludes.

Chandrakanta's collection of poems "*Yahin Kahin Aas-Paas*" welcomed

Well known Hindi novelist and short story writer Chandrakanta has made an impressive debut as a poet with the publication of her first collection of poems "*Yahin Kahin Aas-Paas*". The book was reviewed at a special function organised under the joint auspices of the Russian Cultural Centre, Parichay Sahitya Parishad and Women Writers' Association of India in the seminar room of Russian Cultural Centre, New Delhi on May 19, 2000. Noted Hindi literary critic and writer, Dr. Namwar Singh chaired the function.

Prominent among the speakers were the chief guest, Dr. Nirmala Jain, Mr. Ajit Kumar, Mrs. Dineshnandini Dalmia, Mr. Ajit Kumar, Dr. Rajkumar Saini and Ms. Padma Sachdev. Ms. Urmil Satyabhushan and Mr. Inder Dev conducted the discussion, introducing the poetess and reading out poems from the collection.

Speaking from the chair, Dr. Namwar Singh quoted some lines of the poem "*Sochte the ghar ke log*". Dr. Namwar Singh said that the poem poignantly expresses the trauma and tragedy of displacement that the Kashmiri Pandits have undergone. Referring to Lal Ded's famous line, "*Zuv chhum bhramaan gara gatsha ha*", that occurs in one of Chandrakanta's poems, Dr. Namwar Singh said that this line brings alive the entire pain and suffering of the uprooted Pandits. He was of the view that poems like "*Chhoti si Jheel Hun*", "*Anuttarit Prashna*", "*Nanhi Bachchi*" and "*Soyi ki Soyi*" show that Chandrakanta has made a mark as a poet and established a distinct identity and idiom of her own in Hindi poetry. In this age of intense competitive struggle, she gives voice to whatever little sensitivity there is still left in man, praying for humanity to be saved. And this is something that should be welcomed, Dr. Namwar Singh observed.

In her speech, Dr. Nirmala Jain referred to poems like "*Main Ghar se Milne Gayi*" and said that there are some who migrate from their country to settle in a foreign country and talk of their uprootment when they can return to their home any day they choose. But those who have been hounded out of their homes and hearths have no option left for them. It is the pain of such people who have lost their home that finds a powerful expression in Chandrakanta's poems.

Mrs. Dineshnandini Dalmia quoted extensively from "*Yahin Kahin Aas-Paas*", saying that this collection may have come late, but nonetheless its arrival is welcome. "These poems", she went to say "are a document of the pain and suffering of the displaced Kashmiri Pandits, and they touch our innermost hearts at a point where everyone has an intense feeling of being exiled, because somewhere deep in his heart everyone is a displaced person". Concluding, Mrs. Dalmia further said: "Every poem in the collection tells the story of her personal relationship with snow, with river Vitasta, with history, with her soil — with everything made of the five elements — and this is really touching."

Padma Sachdev said that she was pleasantly surprised to find the writer of powerful novels like "*Ailan Gali Zinda Hai*" and "*Apne-Apne Konark*" writing poetry. It may be recalled here that Chandrakanta, who comes from Kashmir, is already an established Hindi writer with seven novels and eight short-story collections to her credit which have been received well and widely acclaimed. "*Yahin Kahin Aas-Paas*" is her first collection of poems to be published. It has three sections. The collection has been published by the National Publishing House, Delhi.

Towards the end of the function, Chadrakanta read out several poems from "*Yahin Kahin Aas-Paas*", which left the audience very much impressed, particularly those in which nostalgic memories of Kashmir and the childhood days she spent there find expression, or else those which are about her suffering and struggle as a woman. She has been writing poetry for long, she explained, right from the days when she was twelve. Since then she has lost the place of her birth, her home and today her beautiful land has been ravaged by terrorist violence and she and her people wrenched away from the embrace of its soil.

Art Today organises exhibition of Khosa's paintings

An exhibition of K. Khosa's paintings was organised by Art Today at its gallery in New Delhi from March 15 to March 30, 2000 — an event that enlivened the art scene in the capital.

As a painter Khosa needs no introduction, being one of those who have broken away from the cliched expressions or the faddist approach that dominated contemporary Indian art for quite a long time, creating for himself an idiom that is uniquely his own and entirely fresh. His is a vision of artistic creativity brimming with the possibilities of a spiritual approach to reality.

Khosa's work spans three decades now, displaying shifts in emphasis and technique that have been widely taken notice of. To use his own words, the first decade of his work "belonged to the genre where the subject of the painting was important, the colours and forms being only instrumental."

Supreme Sunrise

The second decade reflected the "storms of emotions or passions" where the lines were "sinuous and yet tense".The present phase reflects an attempt to "grasp the root of our very being". Inspired by Upanishadic thought, the paintings belonging to this phase, and put up at the exhibition, reveal a core of spirituality in Khosa's art. In these paintings, the artist has shown an awareness of unity with the universal spirit that pervades the five elements of nature. Here we see him looking upon art as an attempt to "entangle the self with the basic stuff of reality". Perhaps that explains the use of luminous colours by him — colours that overwhelm the mind with the suggestion of something deeper and subtler than the outer world of name and form. That also reveals why his paintings are not exactly figurative though not exactly abstract or representative.

Yet another feature that strikes one immediately is the presence in them of two human figures merging with or surrounded by the infinite — the *aham* and the *idam* or the "I" and "the other". In fact the consciousness of "I" also being "the other" is what can be seen in paintings like "This light, this glory", "Journey into the unknown", and "As if by magnet drawn", all acrylic on canvas. The painting "Supreme Sunrise" appears to be highly suggestive of the famous "*dwa suparna*" verse of Kathopanishad. These are paintings of an artist who looks at art as something that makes us "get out of our time-bound egos" and to "enter the world of universal energy". This appears to be more a Shaiva way of looking at things in which the phenomenal world is the manifestation of *Shakti* or the cosmic energy that pervades everything.

Journey into the unknown

The exhibition generated a great interest in not only those who knew Khosa, but in the art circles in Delhi in general. It also raised the important though much debated question of whether art has a communicative function or not.

Virendra Bangroo delivers lecture on 'Concept of Space in Kashmiri Architecture'

A unique and conprehensive orientation course entitled "Windows to the Indian Arts", conducted by Dr. Navina Jafa at the Alliance Francaise recently was an attempt to promote understanding of the fundamental concepts of Indian painting, music , architecture, dance and sculpture. The course is focussed primarily on ambassadors, diplomats, art historians and art connoisseurs stationed in India.

The third lecture in the series, "The Concept of Space in Kashmiri Architecture", with special to ancient temple architecture, was delivered by Mr. Virendra Bangroo, museologist, art connoisseur and a founder member of NSKRI.

In his lecture Mr Bangroo dwelt upon the bounties that nature has bestowed on Kashmir and its glorious tradition of art and architecture. The Hindu temple, he said, is a symbol, or rather an aggregate of various symbols of the cosmos. It is concieved in terms of the human poersonality, as the *shilpa shastras* ordain that the temple should be worshiped as *purusha*. The names of the various limbs of the human body from the foot to the crown of the head are applied in Indian architectural texts to different parts of the temple structure. But the *vastu purusha* is lifeless unless the soul resides in it. The *pratima* or image in the temple is its real life, the sanctum being the *garbha griha* or the house of the womb. Mr. Bangroo pointed out that the temples were laid in ancient times according to a well defined plan. Building a temple was a ritual, with every stone laid consecrated to God by the holy chants of the Brahmins.

Mr. Bangroo gave a history of the temple architecture of Kashmir, explaining the influences that it absorbed from various sources and the original traits and characteristics that it evolved. From the temple at Loduv to the magnificient Martand built by Lalitaditya and the Awantiswamin and Awantishwar temples of Awantivarman, Mr. Bangroo gave examples of the refinement and the sophistication that marked the temple building activity in Kashmir which continued unhindered till late 12th century, though decline had already set in in the beginning of the tenth century.

An offshoot of the Kashmir style of architecture, Mr Bangroo said is found in the norther Punjab and the erstwhile North-Western Frontier Province which has now become a part of Pakistan. The temples at Amb, Malot, Bilot and Kafirkot exhibit a strong a affinity to some of the architectural elements of the Kashmir temple, like the enclosed courtyard, pyramidal roof, trefoil arches and fluted columns. These influences also percolated down to the western Himalayan architecture from Ladakh to Nepal. These elements, Mr. Bangroo concluded, resurfaced in Muslim shrines and residential houses in the succeeding periods.
Mr. Bangroo's lecture was very much appreciated by the audience consisting mainly of ambassadors, diplomats and art historians that had come to participate in the course.

Dr. C. L. Raina conducts workshop on Hindu religion and yoga in Trinidad.

According to a press release issued by Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Trinidad, Dr. Chaman Lal Raina, well-known scholar and a founder member of NSKRI, visited Trinidad in May and conducted a number of workshops on "Procedures in the Performance of Religious Functions" with Pandits and executive members of the Sabha in Chaguanas.

Dr. Raina also delivered discourses on the Vedas, not only on their contents, but also on the methods of chanting the Vedic *mantras*, the release says. He was interviewed on Trinidad Television's Morning Edition in which he "enlightened the nation not only about the Vedic philosophy but on other forms of Hinduism as well." He also had an audience with the Prime Minister and other Members of Parliament of Trinidad.

Dr. Raina's visit left a great impact on the scholars of Trinidad. Pandit Sadanan Ramnarine, Secretary, Vedic Pandits Parishad of the country, described him as "the most distinguished research scholar to visit our shore in recent times."

Dr. Raina presently lives in Miami, Florida, USA.

BOOKS

Poetry in the time of exile

"**Waves**" : Selected poems of Arjan Dev Majboor. Translated from Kashmiri by Arvind Gigoo. Nagaraj Publications, New Delhi, 1999, pp 58, price Rs. 125.

Well known Kashmiri poet Arjan Dev Majboor, now living as a displaced person in Jammu's Udhampur town, is making 'waves'. Literally. For "Waves" is the title he has given to the recently published collection of his selected Kashmiri poems translated into English by Arvind Gigoo. The idea perhaps is, to present the best of his work to an audience not acquainted with Kashmiri. But whether a slender volume like this – of just 58 pages and containing 24 poems only – can provide an adequate insight into the dimensions of creativity of a poet who has been writing for the last 50 years and has produced five volumes of poetry is rather doubtful.

Arjan Dev Majboor is an important name in contemporary Kashmiri poetry, not only because he has had a rather long innings as a poet, but also because he was part of a circle to which poets like Dina Nath Nadim, Rehman Rahi and Amin Kamil belonged and with them had a role in launching the progressive moment in the post-independence era. Believing literature to be a potent instrument to fight what they called "the imperialist forces" — a term that had a special connotation in the context of the political situation prevailing in Kashmir — the progressives wrote much that was propaganda and slogan mongering in the beginning, but with their sharp sense of realism and a proclivity for experimentation, they definitely helped in bringing about a change in the sensibility and idiom of Kashmiri poetry which had got bogged down in the "gul-o-bulbul" imagery. And when the progressive movement started disintegrating in the late fifties and Nadim, Rahi and Kamil set out to explore new paths for themselves, Majboor did not lag far behind. Keeping track of the new literary developments, he too started experimenting, quite meaningfully, with new forms and themes, and in the process succeeded in establishing a distinct idiom of his own. Ironically, however, four-day wonders like Noor Mohammad Roshan hogged more limelight than poets like Majboor — not for academic or literary but political reasons. He remained constantly creative and is so to this day, even though Islamic terrorism has shattered the whole world around him.

One can not be sure whether "Waves" reflects all these shifts and developments in Majboor's poetry, but the image that this collection presents is of a poet deeply disturbed and distressed by the violence and terror that have ferociously mauled human values and the uninhibited sway of hate-breeding ideologies that have put the future of the entire mankind in jeopardy — his own people being the worst victims of horrendous onslaughts. But what is typical of Majboor is his deep faith in the essential goodness of man, which he believes will eventually prevail. Existentialist problems also surface in these poems, though occasionally, and then there is that element of romanticism that cannot hold itself back. But what strikes one most is his optimism which not even the given circumstances of his and his people's forced exile have subdued. Perhaps, it is the nostalgia for his lost paradisal homeland that keep his creative juices flowing.

In poems like "The Topsy-Turvy Tree", Majboor does, however, seem to be upset by the reversal of values that is creating an upheaval in the present-day world. Warning of the apocalyptic events that could follow, leading to an inexorable end of everything, he says:

"Listen !
There will be no forests
Eagles won't fly,
they will walk
Love will wither
Compassion will burn
And man
With the snake
Will enter the cave"

But in another poem, "The Coming of Millennium", he replaces these forebodings of doom with a vision of hope and peace. He dreams of a new world taking its birth amidst the present chaos, with Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, guiding man's destiny and giving a call for reshaping and purifying everything in a dawn of new wisdom:

Purity will reign
Darkness will vanish
And fear will go
Love will prevail
Peace will flower !

Yet the thought from of which this optimism springs has a deeper core:

The solitude of beauty
is
dear
but
dearer
the search for a ray
in darkness ("Lover")

It appears that though Arjan Dev Majboor has shed much of the ideological baggage he carried over from the days of "progressivism", his imagination is still animated by utopian dreams.

In the poem "Chilled Words", the poet seems to be facing a crisis of expression. Old words have lost their meanings in the changed context of things, and new words are needed to deal with the new reality, he feels:

Give me words
the miracle of words
Give me the springs of love
the grey dawn
basketfuls of flowers
the dancing shy morn
fragrant colourful dusk
They will wash the pale earth
Light will cover the world.

But perhaps the poems that have the power to touch us and engross us most are those that reveal Majboor's passionate attachment to the land of his birth. The fragrance of Kashmir's soil wafts through these poems giving them their peculiar flavour. It is the trauma and tragedy of uprootment from this soil — a fate that the poet shares with lakhs of his other displaced and dispossessed brethren — that find most poigant expression in poems like "Wilderness", "A Funeral", "Mind". "The Dance is on", "Restless", "Prison" and "To the Swan", which resonate with nostalgia. They reflect his intense desire that the meaning of his existence should survive through memory in the nightmarish wilderness of exile:

Now
I am stranded in wilderness
waiting for the tree
the water
and
the light ("Wilderness")

"Wet memories" of his ravaged home "transfix" the poet's heart and leave him crippled and helpless:

That city is a litter of
broken bricks
burnt houses
and choked gutters
Their present,
our past
and your future
fall to pieces before the gun
("Rootless")

Banished from his home, Majboor feels that he and his people are languishing as prisoners, their heritage destroyed and their past burnt. Yet there is hope in the core of this sadness and sorrow:

Heritage has gone astray
because
past has burnt
Blossoms have bloomed
even in the dry sand

"To the Swan" is a long narrative poem written after the manner of Kalidas' "Meghadootam" which Majboor happens to have translated into Kashmiri. Baring his heart before the swan, the vehicle of Saraswati, the goddess of Wisdom, he speaks of Kashmir, its past glories, its culture, the myriad hues of its stunningly beautiful landscapes, and the soul benumbing sense of having lost it all even as death and destruction stalk the paradisal Valley where once "hermits meditated". Pining for it, he wants the ordeal through which he and his people are passing to end.

"Piety will swill stones", he hopes as "the soul of the Valley is pure" — a rather very naive summing up when the destiny of a whole people struggling for survival is at stake.

We can not say how reliable is the evidence of the translation in helping us to form an opinion about the poems included in this selection. There is no introduction by the poet nor any translator's note to guide the reader about the basis of this selection. Nor do we know whether the selection was done by the poet or the translator. However, Arvind Gigoo is himself a poet and a very competent translator, and the general tone and feel of his translations is good. What he has done in "Waves" is to recreate a new poem in English out of the materials of the Kashmiri originals, generally using the device of paraphrasing, to bring out the quintessential meaning. And it is in this attempt of carrying across cultures that his English sometimes fails to take on the nuances of the original. At such

Contd on pp 20 col.2

Compulsions of a displaced people

"Chetinaav" :
Collection of Kashmiri essays by
Pushkar Nath Dhar,
published by the author himself from Jammu, 1999, pp. 102, Rs. 100

Cataclysmic as they were, the events of 1990 that shook Kashmir and made the entire community of Kashmiri Pandits refugees overnight, turned several people into writers, Pushkar Nath Dhar, a retired civil aviation officer of the Indian Airlines being one of them. Dhar was so moved by the plight of his people who were forced to live in the hell named exile in God-forsaken camps in Jammu and other places — a plight that he shared with them — that he took to writing essays, a genre in which not much has been written in Kashmiri.

"*Chetinaav*", is a collection of thirty such essays written by him over the last ten years, some of them having appeared in community magazines like the 'Koshur Samachar' and 'Khir Bhawani Times' earlier.

The collection has been aptly titled, for the word "*Chetinaav*" means 'compulsions' and in these essays Dhar has tried to record the "compulsions" of his people in living a life of misery and hopelessness forced upon them by circumstances. In a simple but touching manner he has presented vignettes of camp life and the sorrow, despair, unhappiness that have become the lot of the Kashmiri Pandit exiles, suffering in independent India for being a symbols of Indian nationalism. The irony becomes clear to anyone who goes through the essays that portray the Pandits' grim struggle for survival and their desperate attempt to keep their identity intact. Dhar shows them as unfortunate victims of Jehadi violence, yet a brave people trying to come to terms with the tragedy of their uprootment even as they are facing callous indifference, humiliation and discrimination with stoic courage.

What makes the essays readable and interesting even with their grim contents is the writer's sense of humour which he displays with good effect. Each essay has a Kashmiri proverb or saying for its title followed by anecdotes about life inside a refugee camp or problems of the displaced Pandits related often with a touch of humour or satire, and interpreted in the light of the given saying, giving it a new context. In fact the appeal of the essays lies in the writer's style of interrelating folklore and actual facts of life. Often the protagonist in an essay makes forays into the past and sheds interesting light on a forgotten custom, tradition or ritual. Viewed from this angle the essays also look like an attempt at a sociological study. Quite absorbing to some extent, even though not all the stories behind the sayings have been correctly presented or interpreted.

There is one thing, however, that has a jarring effect. The essays give a feeling that the author too has propensity to accept orchestrated falsehoods as facts of history. He too has repeated things that have already been parroted a billion times —the usual cliches about the amity and brotherhood with which the two communities have been living in Kashmir, the mischief done by the British with their pernicious two-nation theory to dismantle this harmony, the traditional ethos of tolerance which allows a Hindu sacred place to co-exist cheek by jowl with a Muslim shrine, the peaceful manner in which Islam was propagated in Kashmir by Sufis and saints and a host of other myths and shibboleths that have been allowed to perpetuate and cloud the actual truth about Kashmir and its history. It betrays either a pathetic lack of knowledge about the role of Islam in Kashmir or a deliberate attempt to perpetuate lies and falsehoods to bail out the Kashmiri Muslims. If there was ever a period in which the Pandits breathed in relative peace after centuries of persecution, brutal proselytization and genocidal onslaughts by Islamic zealots, it was the interregnum of 125 years of Sikh and Dogra rule. And if shrines like the Shah Hamdan mosque and the shrine of Mahakali exist side by side on the banks of Jhelum in Srinagar — an example that is invariably given to showcase the so-called "secularism" prevailing in Kashmir — it is not because of any religious tolerance on the part of the Kashmiri Muslims but because of their attempts to usurp holy places of the Hindus. The Shah Hamdan mosque actually stands on what was originally a Hindu shrine of which only a small area has been left out — the piece of land where the image of Mahakali is engraved on a rock. Pushkar Nath Dhar ought to have known these facts — at least after witnessing the treatment his people received at the hands of the Islamist terrorists in 1990. Terrorist violence in Kashmir was not a sudden eruption, as he would like

us to believe, but the result of anti-India and anti-Hindu sentiments and the blind hatred deeply entrenched in Muslim minds. The author too has shown awareness of this in some of the essays included in this collection, but expressions of such awareness are only few and far between.

Introducing Pushkar Nath Dhar on the blurb of the book, well-known Kashmiri playwright Moti Lal Kemmu has said that it is his intense desire that Kashmiri should be used in day-to-day communication in Kashmiri Pandit homes, that the Pandits should not lose their culture and their language. He also wants that the Kashmiri language should be written and read in the Devanagari script. These sentiments are indeed laudable, as is Dhar's own attempt to give them a practical shape, but isn't the Kashmiri he has used in "*Chetinaav*" a bit too heavily laden with Persian and Arabic diction?

Wouldn't he have set a good example if he had chosen to write his essays in really chaste Kashmiri rather than in a language that appears to be nothing more than a dialect of Arabic? Whatever be the case, "*Chetinaav*" is a book to be welcomed for both its contents as well as the courage shown by the author to use the Devanagari script. The script he has used, however, needs to be modified further so that it can render Kashmiri vowel sounds more appropriately.

contd. from pp 18 col.1 : 'Waves'

places what slips away in the translation is the very Kashmiriness of the context. This is what has happened, for instance, in the poems "The Bronze Hand", "The Painting" and "Chiselled Words"— all of which have been taken from the collection "*Paad Samayik*" (The Footprints of Time). In "The Bronze Hand", the "lovely luminous hands" ("*khoshivuny shangarafy atha*") of the original, have become "The bronze hand" and the lines "*atha kastam divta sundy yus gomut ruzith dyanas manz / nata Gautam Buddh anugrah mudra darith*" (the hands of some god lost in meditation or of Gautam Buddha in a posture bestowing grace) have been translated as "or a hermit's meditating upon the word or Buddha's when he spoke of Fire". Similarly, in "The Coming Millennium", Saraswati's vehicle, "the white-winged swan" has been translated as "the white-winged horse", which just does not gel with the original. Surely, the translator should have taken more care, for such things are bound to confuse the reader who has read the work at first hand.

— S. S. T.

Pandit Somnath's Pilgrimage to Kailash

The year was 1027 AD. Pandit Somnath, a Kashmiri Shaiva scholar and astrologer, made a pilgrimage to the holy Mount Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva. Accompanying him were two other scholars Pandit Lakshmikara and Bhanushree Chandra Rahula. At Kailash, the brilliant Brahmin astrologer from Kashmir, translated the *Kalachkra Jyotishya* into the Tibetan language and introduced the 'Brihaspati cycle' of sixty years, called the *'Brihaspati prabhava'*, to the Indian Calendar. He divided this cycle of sixty years into five sub-cycles of twelve years each. According to the tradition established by Pandit Somnath, a big fair was held at Sershung near Kailash. It was a kind of a Kumbh Mela, you may say, taking into consideration the large number of people that participated in it. Who says the Kashmiris remained confined to the places of pilgrimage within the Kashmir *Mandala* and showed a lack of the spirit of adventure by not going to pilgrimage centres outside it?

(Input : S. N. Pandita)

Role of 'Unmesh' in sustaining Kashmiri culture in exile

My heartiest congratulations to you and your colleagues, first for bringing out the Jan-March issue of 'Unmesh', secondly for the feature on "Language and Identity -II from Editor's Desk, thirdly for the essay "Faces of Glory" featuring Kashmiri philosopher Prof. Srikanth Toshakhani, fourthly for Virendra Bangroo's article focussing on the temple architecture of ancient Kashmir, and for the good news that future issues of 'Unmesh' would be starting new feature including a column titled Let Us Learn Sharada". I hope that 'Unmesh' would overcome all difficulties in its way and grow as a leading voice to debate the vital issues of support and sustenance of kashmiri culture now living in exile.

Prof. Dr. Girdhari Lal Pandit,
C/9 - Maurice Nagar,
Delhi University Qrs,
Delhi - 110 007

The Need for a Forceful Cultural Movement

Please refer to 'Unmesh' issue of Jan.-March 2000, page-1. I agree that Jammu needs special attention to spread the cultural movement of Kashmiri Pandits, as suggested by Dr. Ajay Chrangoo. Besides the fact that maximum number of Kashmiri Pandits live in Jammu it is part of our state. Together from Jammu and Delhi, a vigorous and forcible push is to be given to the movement in all those areas wherever Kashmiri Pandits live. Special attention is to be paid to the drive that we, Kashmiri Pandits, wherever we are, do not merge with any other community. We have to maintain our identity.

The fact remains that right from the recent exodus we almost ignored the cultural front, as against the leading and dominating role played by us in 1947 cultural renaissance. Cultural movement does not help only to preserve the identity, it also helps to regain unity and oneness. Mr M. L. Kemmu has rightly emphasized the need for an action-oriented agenda – 'movement' – to create a real and forceful impact on the cultural front.

It is heartening to know that Prof B. L. Fotedar has volunteered to undertake organisation and activation of Jammu NSKRI in a manner that would give it the footing to project its agenda and objectives.

Omkar Aima,
B/3, Ratan Priya,
216, Cadell Road,
Mumbai - 400 016

Prof. S. K. Toshkhani and Prof J. L. Kaul

'Unmesh' Vol. III No.19, Jan.-March 2000 had a special interest for me. Late Toshakhani Saheb was a good friend of my late father Prof J. L. Kaul (who retired as Principal, S.P. College) and they were colleagues on the staff of the college. Toshakhani Saheb was a regular visitor to our house as early as when we lived in our ancestral home in downtown area of Dabtal, Ganzkhud, Ali Kadal. I was a small lad then and I vividly remember Toshakhani Saheb. As a matter of fact the film you talk about, you will get a glimpse of my father in it, for they both worked together in many social welfare areas of the community.....

It may interest you to know that I must have been among many few then who was taught at home till primary stage and all the teaching was done in Kashmiri. I was presented by Toshakhani Saheb the Primer in Kashmiri compiled by him. And I had a tutor to teach me in mother tongue.

Bhavanesh Kaul,
D-II/2219,Vasant Kunj,
New Delhi - 110 070

Prof. S. K. Toshakhani and the Kashmiri Dictionary

Being one of the editors in the Kashmiri Dictionary Section of the J&K Cultural Academy, I would like to add some facts regarding Prof. Shrikanth Toshkhani's personality. As there was no scholar of his calibre in the J&K state, the Chief Minister of the State Mr. Ghulam Mohd Sadiq (who happened to be his student of Philosophy in Amar Singh College) recommended his name for Chief Editorship of Kashmiri -Kashmiri and Urdu-Kashmiri Dictionary projects. On his personal request, SKT came from Poona and undertook the prestigious assignment of both the projects.

After some time the first volume of the Kashmiri Dictionary was published under the name of 'Kashir Lafzraash' and was distributed among the members of the editorial staff. Some members of the staff (specially Muslims) criticized the Dictionary inside and outside the Academy. They alleged that it did not contain sufficient number of Persian and Arabic words. "While there is a word like 'Benaras' in the Dictionary, why not Bhagdad?", they asked. The staff members of the Editorial Board and surveyors had collected the words from the ancient Kashmiri literature etc. for inclusion in the Dictionary. Bhagdad had no significance as compared to Benaras.

Benaras has a historical and cultural background in our literature. So it was included in the Dictionary.Then the Academy convened a meeting of some scholars to study the Dictionary.

While discussing the matter, it was told to the Academy authorities in the meeting that if some words of Arabic and Persian origin were missing in the Dictionary, these could be included in an addenda. But they did not accept this suggestion. There were some hostile elements who wanted to tarnish the image of a great personality, viz. Prof. Toshkhani, but due to God's grace, they did not succeed in this impious mission.At last the Academy formed a committee consisting of four members — Prof. P. N. Pushp, Prof. M. Hajini, Prof. J.L. Kaul and Mirza Arif Beg, to review the dictionary. After some time they submitted their report to the Secretary. According to the report the first volume of the dictionary was burnt in the premises of the Tagore Hall, Srinagar. The first thing that fanatics in the committee did was to get its original name "Kashir Lafzraash" replaced. The word "*lafz*" is derived from Arabic and "*raash*" is derived from Sanskrit which means a heap / abundance etc. The word "*raash*" is common in our daily usage. Due to their narrow vision they preferred the English word "Dictionary" instead of the Sanskrit word '*raash*'. However, I have the First Volume of the Dictionary — Kashir Lafzraash — in my possession. It was in such an uncongenial atmosphere that SKT completed both the projects in time.

It may not be irrelevant to mention here that under Prof. Toshkhani's guidance in the field of linguistics, I have learnt much. His guidance proved a turning point in my literary career. The work assigned to me was to trace the etymology of Kashmiri words of Sanskrit and Prakrit origin. This work paved my way for writing a thesis on "A Comparative Study of Kashmiri and Sanskrit Languages". At last, Ph. D degree was conferred upon me.

Dr. B. N. Kalla,
63/6, Trikuta Nagar,
Jammu - 180 004.

Prof. S. K. Toshakhani — my guru

This time the size of 'Unmesh' is good. The paper and colour of the cover are attractive. The contents are touching. The editor has taken care to write on different aspects of Prof S. K. Toshakhani's personality. I cannot but feel happy about it as he was my guru.

R. K. Jotshi,
Janipur Colony,
Jammu.

Kashmiri Pandit Identity : Factors other than Language

[Mr. L. N. Kaul of Vikaspuri, New Delhi, has sent a long letter running into 14 pages in response to our editorial "Language and Identity - II", which says among other things that apart from language there are other factors also which together constitute identity of a people. We had already referred to some of these factors in the first part of the editorial. He has given his views on each of these vis a vis the Kashmiri Pandits in some detail. We are giving here an abridged version of his letter. As some of the points raised by Mr. Kaul are very important, we would like to invite our readers' views regarding them. — Ed.]

Your editorial 'Language and Identity - II' reflects my views completely. The purpose of this letter is to draw your attention to few other things which to my mind together constitute the identity of a people *viz.* religious rituals, customs, food habits, music, dance, literary activity etc. — a totality which is universally accepted as a definition of culture.

Although it may seem surprising to speak of our distinct identity as Kashmiri Hindus after the 'exile' , while being a part of the Hindus at large, it should be plain to every Kashmiri Pandit that our '*Karmakaanda*' is very different from the rest of the Hindus. Laugaksh Muni, the author of our '*Karmakaanda*' has made it a wonderful mix of Vedic and Tantric rituals. However, this is getting obliterated slowly for obvious reasons. Our priestly class has almost vanished, as their children have taken to secular jobs — and justifiably so. Their younger generation can no longer stand the indignities the '*Karkuns*' heaped on them for centuries. The absence of a Kashmiri *purohit*, particularly at the time of death, is acutely felt. Over the last ten years, since we have been here, I have collected three '*vivah paddhatis*' and two '*yagneopavit sanskar vidhis*', but our *kulaguru* told me that we follow the *Katyayani paddhati*, which is different from all others.

(We may incidentally have to go without our sacred threads as who is there to make them as they have been made for centuries? We may have to depend on the sacred threads available here. Sometime back Dr. Baljinnath Pandit made an appeal in Kashur Samachaar to preserve this art.)

How should we keep alive the tradition of our religious rituals then? There are two ways open for us:

(i) To train a sizeable number of our youngmen in this tradition with the help of those who are still alive and qualified to render help. But where to get these youngmen? Clearly no youngmen would come forward to become priests and no parents would ever ask their sons or wards to take such a vocation.

(ii) The next option is that we all endeavour to become literate enough in Sanskrit to be able to perform such tasks ourselves. After all we are all Brahmins and there

should be no shame in doing such things. We could explore how the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan or any similar organisation can help us in making ourselves fairly proficient in Sanskrit. We could, with their help, prepare audio or video cassettes for the purpose, which members of our community could purchase for private learning at their convenience.

We could try to get all relevant texts relating to our rituals published with a suitable working guide or set of instructions. The late lamented Pt. Keshava Bhatta Shastri of Rainawari had got many such tracts published from the Nirnay Sagar Press on his own, travelling all the way to Bombay in 1920, but his grandchildren sold off such priceless books as junk about 25 years ago while modernising the Krishna Press at Regal Chowk, Srinagar.

'Herath' the greatest and most important of our religious festivals has now shrunk to only one day of observation, instead of thirteen days as was done in our childhood. The day is not far off when we shall have disposed off even *'Vatuk Puja'*, with only the lady folk observing a fast on Shivaratri. We have to ponder as to how best we can celebrate this festival without sacrificing its essential features.

Our *'vanvun'* (traditional ritual songs), a part of both *yagneopavit* and marriage ceremonies are also disappearing. Our ladies now prefer the Muslim *'vanvun'*, as *'vanvungari' or* ladies who led the singing, have almost disappeared.The Pandit *'vanvun'*, called *'henze'* is sublime and profound Samvedic chant, as the late Prof. P.N. Pushp had made clear in his article published in Kashur Samachaar a few years ago. We could have an authentic version of *vanvun* prepared in the shape of audio cassettes.

The Kashmiri musical instruments we know , like *Rabab, Saarang* etc. , are certainly of Central Asian origin. Research is needed regarding which musical instruments were played in Kashmir before its colonization by Muslims. There is a painting of Abhinavagupta in K. C. Pandey's masterpiece on him, showing him sitting cross-legged, surrounded by his disciples, listening to, as I could see, a *veena* and *mridangam (other instruments I could not figure out)*. The painting was prepared on the basis of Abhinava's famous South Indian disciple Madhuraja's pen-potrait.

Is *'swaranai'* a Kashmiri musical instrument, or just a variation of the *'shehnai'?* The *tumbaknaari* appears to me as authentically Kashmiri, or I could be wrong.How much of *'Soofiana'* music is based on the Hindustani classical music and how much on Iranian? Can it be called "Kashmiri Soofiana music"?

Almost all the cultural and artistic life came to a standstill in Kashmir after the advent of Islam, whatever remained was destroyed root and branch. Therefore to look for continuity in the arts is extremely difficult. Take *'rov'* for instance. Is it to be taken as a Kashmiri folk dance? It seems to be at best a curtailed version of a forgotten dance form.

Coming to costumes, what was the authentic dress the Kashmiri Pandits wore through the ages?. The *'pheran'* is certainly not Kashmiri. *Pheran* as worn by a Kashmiri Pandit male or female was unusually longer compared to that worn by Muslims, making it difficult for the wearer to work while it was on. My grandfather used to tell me that it was deliberately imposed on us by Muslim rulers to enslave us by inducing lethargy. The Pandits, he would say, were a hardy people who tilled land and did other odd jobs too, besides pursuing religious and other studies. He would say that they wore a *'kaftan'*-like garment with a headgear resembling the Himachali cap. The *'dastaar'* which was put on even by college going Kashmiri Pandit students, was also foreign. It strikingly resembles the headgear of the Pathans or Sudanese Muslims.

The attire and jewellery of a Kashmiri Pandit bride invariably include the *'taranga'* and *'dejabor'*. I have it on the authority of Dr. V. Raghavan who, in his biography of Adi Shankaracharya, has quoted from the *'Shankar Digvijay'* that these two things were given to Kashmiri Pandit women by Adi Shankara himself. How far is that true?

There is an urgent need of preparing an authentic version of 'Lalla Vakh' (and other Kashmiri classical literary works). There are several collections, notably that of Prof. Jaylal Kaul, Parimoo, Sarwanand Charagi and many others, but none of these contains a unique set of *vaakhs*. Everybody seems to have a collection of his own. We owe it to our posterity to pass on to it an authentic version of the *"vaakhs"*so that they don't take interpolations like *"Shiv chhuy thali thali rozaan, mo zaan Hyond ta Musalmaan"*, as authentic.

As for food habits, were Kashmiri Pandits non-vegetarians from the beginning ? Has climate to do anything with it? For it is unusual for a Brahmin to be a meat eater. To me it looks to be a post-Buddhist phenomenon.

L. N. Kaul,
66, Gangotri Apartments,
Vikaspuri, New Delhi-110 018

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